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January 2006

Online at <https://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/48437/>

MPRA Paper No. 48437, posted 19 Jul 2013 06:32 UTC

Child Labour and Educational Deprivation of Children : A Review of Literature*

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I. Introduction

It is obvious in any society especially in this modern context, the educational deprivation of children and child labour are undesirable and child schooling is most desirable especially in the perspectives of human capital, human development and human rights. In spite of such given importance of child schooling, there are many children who are not attending schools and many of them are also working. Hence, in the policy perspective, to reduce and thereby to eliminate the phenomenon of child labour and educational deprivation of children, and thereby universalising child schooling in any society, it requires the analysis of key determinant. That is identification of variables that have a significant effect on the educational deprivation of children and child schooling. There has been expanding literature in this direction, however, there is no homogenous pattern found in the determinants. In this context it is an attempt to review the existing literature to bring out the broad understanding with respect to determinant of child labour and educational deprivation of children.

The paper is organised in the following way. The second section deals with the review of the literature on the factors contributing to child labour and educational deprivation of children. The role of the state and its performance including in aspects provision of schooling and quality of schooling is discussed in the third section and the final section concludes.

II. Factors Contributing to Child Labour and Educational Deprivation: Demand Factors

In the literature, they have been specified in two different perspectives. One is the child labour perspective another is the child schooling perspective. There are many reasons stated for the child labour and the educational deprivation of children. In the former case literature

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refers to the working children and in the latter the children those are not attending schools is referred. In the child labour perspective, many of the child labour studies singled out the poverty as one of main the determinant factor of child labour. But there is no universal agreement upon it. Apart, other reasons are illiteracy, household size and composition, occupation of the parents and so on. In child schooling perspective, non-attendance of children in school can be seen in two ways. One is children those who never enrolled and other is those who enrolled but dropped out. Very often stated reasons for children not attending school are that one is economic reasons and other is lack of interest (see Sarvekshna, 1996; Krishnaji, 2001). In a study that analysed the condition of schooling, Krishnaji (2001) observed that those who have not attending school by and large belonged to poor families. Moreover, they engaged in a activities which supplement family income. Hence, the reason shows that high opportunity cost and financial difficulty for schooling. It shows that they are unable to attend school because they have to work. One more interesting reason observed is that parents lack interest in their children's education. In parents verbatim : 'what is the use of schooling, he can earn some money instead, she can do some useful work at home' (Krishnaji, 2001). The statement raises two points. *Firstly*, again it asserts the opportunity cost of education i.e. child contribution to family income. *Secondly*, parents perception of their children's education and the quality of schooling. Therefore, it can be attributed to availability of schools, its access and other related infrastructure and quality of schooling and economic reasons (Tilak, 2002). In this context, an attempt made to review the different factors playing role in child deprivation and to bring out the missing dimensions of the child deprivation.

A. Poverty and Inequality

An important factors (contributing to both child labour as well as educational deprivation of children) upon which great deal of debate generated is poverty in terms of income (see Sinha, 2000; Weiner, 1994, Basu and Van, 1995; Lieten, 2002). Conventional wisdom shows that poverty is the harsh reality of child labour. Poverty is measured in terms of income that is the shortfall of bare minimum subsistence. It is said that for poor families the opportunity cost of children is very high where the child's contribution to family income is necessary for those poor families. Basu and Van (1995) and Basu (1999) analytical work shown that the household would send their child to work when their income out of non-child labour source is below the subsistence income, i.e. poverty is the main cause. There are observations that shows the children contribution to household income is pulling the household out of poverty

(see Lieten, 2002, Ray, 2002). In such case, it seems that though household is not in poverty owing to of children's contribution, children are kept away from school because they had to work. In Asian context, Ray (2001) analysis shows that schooling of children is significantly deterred by household poverty. In other words household poverty has an impact on children's non-attendance of school. But the received wisdom contrasts with conventional wisdom. It is argued that though poverty is a potential determinant of child labour, it is not a major factor (Sinha, 2000; Bhatta, 1998; Lieten, 2000). And Weiner (1994) finds causes elsewhere other than the poverty. Added to it is the evidence of the cross section data for Indian states and cross-country data across developing countries, that there is no significant level of correlation between poverty and child labour. There are countries/states which are relatively poor having less incidence of child labour and high percentage of school going children. The stark examples are that in India two states UP and Kerala having relatively same poverty level, but the incidence of child labour and percentage of children going to school show two extreme positions¹. Many of the studies related the poverty against the child labour which is about reported workers. Other way round of looking into it is the relationship between child schooling and poverty.

As a matter of fact, most of the analysis at the macro level in Indian context used the official poverty estimation by Planning Commission. It is varying with methodology of estimation where recent work by Deaton and Dreze (2002) shows that their estimations are giving different figures compared with official estimation. Also, poverty is discussed in uni-dimensional way that is taking into account the income poverty only. It is need of the hour to consider multi-dimensional aspects of poverty (see Deaton and Dreze, 2002). In this context, child deprivation may be seen along with the overall deprivation of household or a society (Kannan, 2001). Recent study by Jayaraj and Subramanian (2001) is in this direction where it is observed that there is a highly significant correlation between child labour (in liberal definition i.e. all out-of-school children as child labourer) and the level generalised social deprivations. It is observed that there is an increasing function of generalised deprivation of basic requirements which contribute to the capacity for achieving human functioning (Jayaraj and Subramanian, 2002).

In addition to the poverty debate, there has been a discussion recently on the aspect of inequality and its relation to child labour and child schooling. In a review, Grooteart and Kanbur (1995) pointed out that 'the general economic development, equally distributed is the

best and most sustainable way to reducing child labour' (p. 198). This started the analysis of child labour in this direction. Swinnerton and Rodger (1999) analytical work inserted the distribution dimension, which extended the Basu and Van (1995) model for which poverty is the crucial factor. Ranjan (2001) is another work in this direction shows the relationship between inequality in the distribution of incomes and incidence of child labour in the presence of credit constraints where greater inequality is associated with greater incidence of child labour. For empirical evidence, in a cross-country analysis, Ahmed has shown that inequality rather than poverty determines the child labour (Ahmed, 1999). It can be true that even in cursory look at India and Srilanka shows that the poverty levels and per capita income level between these two countries are not that much different unlike the case of child labour and child schooling. Interesting factor is the inequality which is high India and low in Srilanka (See Ul Huk, 1997). In Asian context Ray (2001) examined this aspect and observed that inequality in the distribution of income and incidence of child labour have a positive relationship. That is child labour increases at high level of inequality.

B. Illiteracy

Another major factor, for which there is more or less equivocal consensus, that plays major role in child labour and child schooling is the parent's illiteracy. It is said that illiterate parents tend to place less value for their children's education. Due to their ignorance, parents could not perceive the benefits of education in human capital or human resource perspective. Therefore, by lack of awareness of future benefits of children's education which is a long run phenomenon, parents see the immediate benefits that is by engaging children in the work which is a short run phenomenon. In this direction many studies shows the evidence that child labour decreases with increasing literacy level of parents. On the other hand, child-schooling increases with parents education level (see Visaria and Jacob, 1993; Naidu, 1985). Particularly, female literacy is more influential factor in increasing child schooling and decreasing child labour (see Chaudhri, 1996 and 1997b; Burgohain, 1997).

C. Imperfect Markets: Credit, Land, and Labour

There is a growing analytical as well as empirical literature on the issue of credit market imperfections and its impact on child schooling. In fact, child schooling is related household income level. Most of the low-income households do not have regular flow of income and different external factors and contingencies influence the flow of income. In a situation where

the households perceive a positive returns to education of their children, the availability of credit influences child schooling in times of seasonal fluctuation in income level.

Jacoby and Skoufias (1999) examined the nature of the school attendance of children in response to seasonal fluctuation in the income level of agrarian economy in India where it is observed that the seasonal and external shocks like drought or crop failure in an agrarian economy, disturbs child schooling. There arises the need for credit but the imperfect credit market is not promising one for the situation. Baland and Robinson (1999) has shown that the child labour persists in the society in spite of parents altruistic nature, when parents leave their children with no bequests because of poverty or when the capital markets are imperfect. In other words, it is because of when the parents run out of the resources to educate their children they may have limited options. They are either to sell off their bequests or borrow against them or they can borrow against children's future earnings. These are not possible under the conditions of imperfect capital market. There is no institution which can enforce the intergenerational contract which is liable to moral hazard in repayment. Therefore, the availability of credit on decent terms makes the child schooling better. The well-developed credit or financial market smoothen child schooling. The empirical evidence also brought out in a cross-country analysis in which the studies used different proxies for availability of credit or financial facilities.

Adding to it is the case of imperfect land and labour markets especially in an agrarian economy (Bhalotra and Heady, 2003). Land in rural areas is considered as productive asset and its ownership is socially prestigious.

D. Structure of the Labour Market and Migration

It is observed that one of the factors, which influence the economic roles of the children, is the structure of the labour market (Rodgers and Standing, 1982; Groteart and Kanbur, 1995). The structure of the labour market varies with changes in socio-economic structure of the society. The process of transition from pre-capitalist society to capitalist brought the increased industrialisation, urbanisation and commercialisation and also increasing wage labour and associated unemployment and thereby created the segmented labour market where child labour is demanded given their attributes that cheapness in terms of their wage, docility and submissiveness. Either 19th century Europe or contemporary developing countries there has been demand for child labour in certain activities (Cunningham, 2000; Chandrasekhar, 1995). On the other hand given the need for subsistence level of income and opportunity for

the child to work, the households supply the child labour. Basu (1999)'s luxury axiom says that a household would send its children out to work if its income from non-child labour sources is low. An important factor that affects child schooling thereby child work is adult female's work participation where higher the female work participation rate so is the child's participation in work especially girl child (Grotaert and Kanbur, 1995). On the contrary developed countries experience shows that the coincidence of increasing women's participation in labour market and decline in the magnitude of the child labour (see Cunningham, 2000). Depending upon the situation, the child labour work as substitute or complementary to the adult labour.

Thus the labour market dysfunction is one of the factors which causing child labour. Labour market problems seen in terms of low wages, unemployment, underemployment, unskilled labour and low productivity thereby low level of income. The substitution axiom tells us that adult labour is a substitution for child labour. The employment with below subsistence wage rate, unemployment and underemployment may force the household to send their children to work. Developed countries experience especially that of a classic case Britain, shows that the re-emergence of working class and their growing consciousness and their demand for family wage had the impact on the decline of child labour (Lavalette, 2000, Humphries, 1977).

The impact of migration on children's welfare especially on their schooling is pertinent. Migration has two aspects. One is distress led migration where lack of employment or earning opportunity push out individual or families to seek for livelihood elsewhere. Another attractive employment/earning opportunity which is better than one available at local level, that pulls out. In the latter case there is economic gain but former case it must be economic distress that led to out-migration. In this latter case, on the one hand, adult male members migrate in search of work leaving women and children at home. On the other, it is obvious that, the whole family including children migrate (Rodger and Standing, 1982). Depending up on the age, these children do involve in work along with the parents at the destination place (see Breman, 1995).

E. Demographic Factors: Fertility and Family Size

Another factor associated with the child labour/educational deprivation of children is fertility rate or its proxy family/household size (large family size is a result of high fertility) and the relationship is said to be positive between these indicators. In other words child schooling has negative relationship with fertility/household size. There is a substantial literature on

relationship between fertility, family size and child labour (Shariff, 1997; Mamdani, 1971; Cain, 1977; Vlossaff, 1979; Krishnaji, 1983). But there debate over the direction of relationship between fertility/household size and child labour. Mamdani's (1971) seminal work on this issue indicates that high fertility demand is a result of high economic value of children in the agrarian economy context. In other words fertility is an endogenous factor and it responds demand for child labour. The follow-up studies examined this casual relationship whether it holds true. Shariff (1997) has shown no linear relationship between landholding size and fertility but non-monotonic relationship exists. A variant which contrasts with the earlier observation, argued that instead of high economic value of children, it is the high fertility that resulted in child labour (Dyson, 1991). In other words fertility is exogenous factor which is outside the domain of demand for child labour.

F. Community Effect and its Participation

Community plays important role in educational aspects of children as well as in their well-being. Within the community or society, the existing social norms where peer group influence can change the fellow member's preferences. For instance, regarding child labour and child education, if many of the parents send their children for work for each parent it seems worthwhile to send their children to work. The other way round is to schooling. It indicates that social norms influence the preference of parents about their children whether to send them to work or school. Therefore, one can say that such social stigmas may cost the child schooling (Basu, 1999: 1103). In other word, social norms have both positive and negative impact on child schooling. Positive impact is that in a society where civic community perceives the benefits of education, it generates the demand for education as consequence many of the children will attend schools. And, it facilitates the demonstration effect where the rest of the children also attend schools because of the social stigma cost to keep the children out of school. The negative impact is in other way round where community does not perceive benefits of education, many children do not attend school and they may be engaged in work. It demonstrates the disincentive to send the children to school.

Chaudhri, D.P (1997a) observed three stages of community effect on child labour and educational deprivation of deprivation: stable equilibrium level rate, tipping point and big push and delayed spectacular effects. When a society/community is in socially stable equilibrium level, it considers that everything is normal and acceptable. For instance, child labour and child illiteracy is acceptable in these societies. There is no internal effort to

change, instead there may be resistance to external efforts. There is critical minimum effort is needed to change such societies and when such effort is made it must reach a tipping point (i.e. threshold point) where the society can be more adaptable and flexible to change. If it is not reached threshold point, the society may revert back all its changes to its stable equilibrium level. Once the threshold level is crossed, the society is more flexible and adaptable to changes, then with a big push effect the changes will be dramatic and fast.

Historical experience shows that civil society was the forerunner of child schooling on the eve of the state owned the responsibility of education (Weiner, 1994). And, one of the basic principles of French school system built around is community participation where civic community including parents and teachers supports, monitors and supervises the education system (Chathrath, 2001). In the contemporary scenario, in Indian context, part of the achievement in the educational development in Kerala is attributed to 'community participation and community pressure (see Dreze and Sen, 1995 and 1997). Also, the success story of primary education in Himachal Pradesh within a short period of time is attributed to civic community (World Bank, 1999). In a field study of a Village in Karnataka, Mythili (2002) observed that community participation in school functioning increased the teachers accountability and reduced their shirking, it ensured necessary facilities, and improved the quality of education. As a consequence enrolment is increased. Therefore, it can be said that the success of elementary education especially in public schools in rural areas depends upon the community pressure towards the schooling process. Especially when there is poor quality, the community pressure facilitates the process of achieving higher quality of education (Mythili, 2002).

Field investigation in Uttar Pradesh brought out the evidence of ill-functioning of public school especially in rural areas (see Dreze and Kingdon, 1995). This ill-functioning can be seen in terms of lack of accountability of teachers and their shirking, lack of proper monitoring and supervision mechanism, lack of minimum school infrastructure facilities etc. In this scenario, there is a need for local level mechanism which can rectify these problems. Always expecting these from a hierarchical bureaucracy is difficult to obtain. Here, it comes the role of civic community and their participation and school process and pressure on well functioning.

G. False Consciousness

The false consciousness of the people especially in an agrarian society, that education is not only unnecessary to agriculture community but also injurious in the way that man of the pen is incapable of agriculture work. Indian society is basically an agrarian society in which the words are much relevant for discussion. Lord Howell, a colonial education officer of the British India, while writing on the progress of education in India, he observed the persistence of above false consciousness in Indian society. He said that the argument was nullified in the European context long back and it was established that agriculture also requires the skills and knowledge which increases the production and productivity, as is the case of industry. Nevertheless, in Indian context the belief was that the education is useless for their occupation².

Weiner (1994) observed that the long held belief in Indian society that education does not ‘properly train the children of the poor to work’ so that the children of the poor should work rather than attend school. Also there is a belief that the children of the lower classes should learn to work with their hand rather than with their heads. Moreover it is believed that ‘the education of the poor would lead to increased unemployment and social and political disorder’ (Weiner, 1994: p.5). PROBE (1999) report on India also provides evidence of such beliefs in the society. This kind of belief especially of upper classes creates false consciousness for parents of the lower classes on their children’s schooling.

III. The State, the Child and the Schooling

Now let us examine the supply side factors of schooling i.e. availability of and access to school, its functioning and quality of schooling and the community participation in school functioning.

In the welfare state context, next to parents, the state is the major stakeholder in the lives of children especially of their welfare. In educational aspects the state plays major role, especially in case of basic education. On the one hand the state can directly intervene in the provision of educational facilities. On the other hand, indirectly, it can create enabling condition through its economic and social policy where it can support the poor families with low level of income that keeps children away from the school. In case of direct intervention in education, state can intervene in two ways. *Firstly*, legal action that is enacting and implementing compulsory basic education and child labour prohibition³. *Secondly*, it must

ensure the opportunity of schooling through provision of schooling facilities. In Indian context, Weiner (1994) observed that the failure of state mechanism to ensure basic education to children is the main reason for children not attending schools and children working in India.

Dreze and Sen (1995) observed that since independence, education system in India has suffered with different problems. First, there is inconsistency and confusion over educational policy. Second, financial resource allocation for education. That is public spending is the major source of expenditure on education especially on elementary education. There is inefficient or not sufficient resources are allocated to education in overall expenditure and within the education to the elementary education. Empirical studies observed the relation ship between regional variation in child schooling and public spending across Indian states (for instance, see Reddy, 1995; Sen and Dreze, 1995). It is observed that inadequate public expenditure on education is one of the reason for poor educational achievement (Dreze and Sen, 1995). In Indian context, many of the educational responsibilities and the corresponding public expenditure, especially basic education, are rested with respective state governments. The heterogeneous nature governance across states shows the diversity in educational development. There are large inter-state variations in per capita expenditure on education.

In the case indirect intervention, the social sector expenditure through different welfare programmes can enhance the income level of poor household. It can be through employment/income generation or income transfer through different types of subsidies. Consider the situation where children are not attending schools and working in income saving activities. For instance, water is not available in the household premises they have to draw it from a distant place. In this activity children are engaged to draw water. In such case the provision of water facility may relieve the children from those activities and makes the possibility of children attend school. Empirically it is observed, in Asian context, that the presence of water supply has a positive impact on child schooling (Ray, 2001). This public provision, comes through state social sector expenditure, has indirect impact on schooling. It is observed that public sector expenditure influences poverty levels. For instance, in the 1980's and 90's, when legitimate factors like agriculture growth working slow to reduce poverty, instead it is the public sector expenditure that contributed the decline in the incidence of poverty (see World Bank, 2000). It observed that public expenditure in general also has impact on poverty reduction (Hazel et al, 2000). It can be said that a reduction is

poverty indicates the betterment of economic status which in turn may influence child schooling. Therefore, it could be possible that public sector expenditure in general and social sector in particular influence the child schooling. Hence, the per capita public expenditure in general and social sector in particular would be a determinant factor for the child schooling. In this regard Majumdar (2001) observed that the state apathy in the provision of social security for parents and children in human security perspective.

A. Availability and Access to Schooling

Though household characteristics such as low level of income, poverty plays potential role, they are not the only factors which contributes to educational deprivation of children. Grootert and Kanbur (1995) observed that the overall conditions of the education system could be a powerful influence on the supply of child labour (p.193). Similar observation is made from the ILO (1998) is that the lack of access to relevant and quality education is one of the factors causing prevalence of child labour. Inadequate schools, lack of schools or even the expense of schooling keeps the children away from school and leaves them with little else to do but to work. In other words, as Siddiqi and Patrinos (1995) observed, many times children work simply because there is no access to school (whether far away or no school at all). One of the necessary conditions for the efficiency of the school system is the geographical accessibility as well as availability of a school to the children of the relevant age group (Raza and Nuna, 1981). Access must of seen in three aspects: physical, economic and social access.

However, while providing schooling facility density of population, connectivity of villages and infrastructure facilities matters. When we see the Kerala situation in schooling facilities it has relative advantages compared to rest of Indian states. In Kerala the density of population is very high, and there is connectivity between the villages and the infrastructure facilities are relatively better. Unlike a scattered village, in a densely clustered village, a school can serve maximum number of people where potential capacity of school can be utilised. Moreover access is easy because school may be available at near distance.

Though physical access in terms of availability of school nearby is easy, the cost of schooling makes economic access difficult. Many poor families due to lack of affordability even if the school is available in their vicinity they do not send their children to school. Because they have to pay if they want to educate their child. Articles 26 of Universal Declaration of Human Rights says that education is a basic right and it has to be provided freely at least in

fundamental elementary level of education. Accordingly, many countries it is mandatory to provide free elementary education to every child irrespective his specific identity, India too obliged. However, in practice the 'free elementary education' became a rhetoric rather than reality. In Indian context it is found that the direct cost that parents have to bear is not insignificant even in public schools, leaving aside the opportunity cost (see Tilak, 1995; Krishnaji, 2000; PROBE, 1999).

B. Quality of Schooling

The quality of the education is as important as quantitative expansion of the education system (Raza and Nuna, 1981). There should not be any trade-off between these two aspects, if there is it should be minimised. It is observed that though access is ensured, the poor quality of education often makes the parents think of that attending school is a waste of time (Siddiqi and Patrinos, 1995). Similarly, Weiner (1994) observed that school success rates are partly result of efforts to stimulate parental demand for education, most notably by raising the quality of schools through the improvement of teacher training and in part by holding schools accountable to local authorities (p.178).

As it is mentioned above, one of the reasons that parents sought for not sending their children to school is 'not interested' in education (see Sarvekshna, 1998; Krishnaji, 2000; Tilak, 2002). It indicates that the parent's perception of education for their children. Given the altruistic behaviour, parents think of the best for their children. In this situation, when parents are willing to send their children to school but the quality of schooling or teaching is not at satisfactory level then there is possibility that they drop their children from the school when they thought that their children are getting nothing from the school. Poor quality of schooling cited many reasons, which are lack of proper physical infrastructure facilities, inadequacy of teachers, teachers truancy, poor administration, low quality of teachers and gross disinterest in the activities of the school. There is a clear empirical evidence of this kind is brought out in different field investigations especially in Uttar Pradesh (see Dreze and Kingdon, 1995).

IV. Conclusion

In this paper an attempt is made to review the literature with respect to the phenomenon of child labour and educational deprivation of children and their associated factors. The analysis is framed in to the demand-supply framework. The demand for schooling is conditioned by the socio-economic condition at the household level and supply of schooling depends on

public provision of schooling including access and quality of schooling. There wide range of factor and interactions brought into the analysis of child labour and educational deprivation of children.

* * *

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End Notes

¹ For details on educational attainment in both states See Dreze and Sen (1995, 1996).

² Even in the intellectual circles at one point, there was a false consciousness. Where it was argued that invoking the need for schooling for all children within a certain age group serves no useful purpose without consideration of country specific or region specific social realities (Dube, 1981). It implies that cultural specificity influences the role of children in terms of either schooling or work.

³ While discussing legislative action against child labour, Weiner (1994) argues that if the state is going for such legal action it is legislation for the compulsory education which is more effective than legislation for banning child labour. Historical experience developed countries also shows the evidence (Weiner, 1994).